Simon Called Peter

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SIMON CALLED PETER

BY BELLE CHAPMAN MORRILL

Illustrations by E. Louise Larkin

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TO
THE BOYS AND GIRLS
OF
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, GIRARD, OHIO
AND
IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH, ROCHESTER, N. Y.
WHO HELPED WITH THESE STORIES

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How These Stories Came to Be Written

Several years ago a group of older boys and girls asked about the boy Simon who grew to be Peter, the disciple. With their help, the first five stories in this book were written. They were published in the story paper *Juniors* as "might-have-happened stories."

Most of the stories of the man, Peter, are based on stories found in the New Testament. Some are from other books about Peter and the world in Peter's day.

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The Forbidden Boat

AN UNHAPPY red-haired boy clad in a red and blue and green tunic dangled his bare legs over the edge of a small dock at the front of his square, white-washed house in the village of Bethsaida. The name of the village meant "house of fish," and it was well named, for nearly all of the people who lived there earned their living by fishing in the waters of the pear-shaped lake. Now and then the moping boy, Simon, would give the dock a vicious kick. He was angry because he could not go out with the evening fishing boats.

Beside him sat Andrew, his younger brother, watching the red and purple sunset clouds. He never grew tired of trying to see things in their strange, piled-up shapes. Some were like lions' heads, all shaggy; some like his grandfather's head with its long beard; and sometimes there was one like the golden dome of the beautiful Temple at Jerusalem. Although he was younger than Simon, Andrew was more thoughtful, and his parents trusted him to keep his quick-tempered brother out of mischief, at least a part of the time.

"Let's tell what we see in the clouds tonight!" Andrew began—

"Don't want to," was Simon's quick reply. "Want to go out in the boat by myself. James and John go out alone. I can row, and I can swim, some."

"But you don't swim in deep water yet. Besides we should honor our father."

"But I want to go out in the boat," Simon persisted.

While the boys were talking, the short twilight was quickly changed to dusk. How exciting it would be to manage a boat in the dark, with only the stars to tell you which way to go! Simon slid off the dock.

"I'm only going to sit in the boat," he explained before Andrew could object. Andrew said nothing. He didn't approve, but he knew he must stay with Simon that evening. Their father already had gone out for the night's fishing, and their mother had gone to help neighbor Rachel, whose little girl Esther

was sick. Then Andrew stepped down into the boat, too. Through the growing dusk they imagined that they could still see the sails of the boats in the distance, where their father, Zebedee, James and John fished with their hired helpers every night.

While Simon and Andrew were sitting with their backs to the shore, a breeze from the snow-capped mountains behind them began to ruffle the water. The boat rocked, and Simon swayed back and forth to rock it still more.

"See how big the waves are getting!" he shouted to Andrew above the noise of the rising wind.

"Yes," replied Andrew. "You'd better stop rocking the boat." He turned to look at the coming storm. Then he discovered something serious. "The rope has untied! We're loose from the dock!" he cried.

"We can row back!" Simon called, not a bit troubled.

"But where are the oars?" shouted Andrew.

"Oars?" echoed Simon. "Oh, yes!" He paused as if he did not want to say anything more. Then he added, "I took them out of the boat this morning. I guess I must have forgotten to put them back."

"Perhaps we could swim to shore," Andrew suggested.

"No," Simon objected, "for then the boat might be lost or broken, and Father would be angry. Let's use our hands for paddles."

For a few minutes they leaned over opposite sides of the boat and tried to push the water back

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with their hands. But the north wind was against them, and the water was growing rougher every minute. Now thick sheets of rain hid the houses on the shore. The water was splashing over the sides of the boat. Now and then a big wave spun the boat around in circles.

Simon turned toward the shore and began to call for help, but the wind was too strong to carry his voice in that direction. Then Andrew thought of something.

"Maybe the wind will carry our voices to the fishing boats if we face that way when we call," he said.

They called and called until they were hoarse. Every minute Simon expected to be washed overboard, and he wished he had learned to swim as well as Andrew.

"Hark!" Andrew's keen ears had caught a faint sound. Both boys listened. Then through the dark they heard a faraway voice calling, "Coming!"

Again they shouted, and the voice answered them. As it came nearer, Simon recognized James's voice. Soon, through the rain, they saw Zebedee's big boat. The men were rowing against the wind, and James and John were in the prow of the boat, watching anxiously. In a few seconds the boys' boat had been fastened firmly to the large one and was being safely towed through the waves.

As they neared the dock, Simon saw his mother and some of the other women waiting. His mother was crying.

"Oh, Simon," she gasped between her sobs, "I was so worried when I could not find you and the boat was gone."

Simon really was sorry when he saw his mother crying. Why was it that he was bad when he did not mean to be! He was asleep when his father came home, but as soon as he awoke he told his father just what had happened. His father looked serious.

"I heard something of this from Zebedee," he said. "I fear it will be some time before I can trust you to go out in the boat with me. Until you can learn to make yourself behave, how can you make a boat behave? In two years you will be old enough to take your vows in the Temple as a son of the law. And if by that time—well, we shall see."

That night, after Simon lay down on his sleeping mat, he was awake for a long time, planning how good he would be during the next two years.

Simon Has an Adventure

"Look at my muscle, Father!" Simon stopped rowing and pushed up the loose sleeve of his striped tunic.

His father, who was sitting behind him in one of the small fishing boats, smiled and answered quietly,

"Yes, Son. Your stroke is stronger, and you are swimming better. You will be a man yet."

To show how strong he was, Simon gave a quick jerk. One oar dipped too deep, and the other skidded over the surface in a chain of splashes.

"Praise turned your head. Don't think too much of what others say. That will be enough for today. It must be time for the good evening meal your mother is preparing."

Not since the night when the boys had drifted out on the lake without oars in the boat, had Simon asked to go out alone. But his father had taken him out in the boat nearly every evening before he started for the night's fishing. And most of the time he let Simon row.

It was only a step from the dock to the little square house with the flat roof where his mother's flax was drying. Later she would weave it and dye it and use the cloth to make linen clothes for the family, perhaps a new tunic for him. Although it was still light outside, the house with its one window was dark and Andrew was filling the little lamp with oil. On the clean table were broiled fish, small flat loaves of bread, goat's milk and pressed cakes of dried figs. The family stood while the father blessed the food, and then sat down for the main meal of the day.

First the father helped himself from the dishes in the center of the table, then the others followed. Simon and Andrew were very busy eating when they heard a sudden "ba-a-a" just behind them. In the doorway stood a bowlegged little lamb. Their mother laughed.

"Neighbor Zebedee gave that lamb to Rachel's little Esther, and the lamb follows her every minute. Perhaps he has lost her," she said.

"He bumps her over, too," added Andrew, "but she doesn't care. I'll take him home so he won't wander off and really get lost."

Dipping a piece of bread in the bowl of thick goat's milk, he held it just above the lamb's nose, and led it down the street to Esther's house.

Next morning while Simon was mending one of his father's nets by the water's edge, little Esther and the lamb were playing near by. Then came a sudden, frightened cry, and looking up Simon saw

the lamb on the dock, looking down into the water with a puzzled expression. He must have pushed Esther over the edge, Simon decided. Kicking off his sandals and tucking the long ends of his tunic into his girdle, he ran to the edge of the dock. The child was only a few feet out but the water was deep. At once he dove in, swimming up behind her so that she could not grab him and pull him under water.

"Quiet, quiet," he called, and holding her firmly he took quick strokes with his legs and free arm. In a few seconds they had struck the sandy beach, and he had set the frightened child on her feet again.

That night Simon was the hero of the village. It made him feel almost like a man to have the men and women talking to him, and to see the boys and girls looking at him enviously. He wished his father would say something. When it was time to go out in the evening boats, Simon grabbed a heavy net and tried to trail it along down to the boat. His father helped him with the load.

"Do you remember what the Wise Man said?" his father asked. " 'A wise son maketh a glad father.' Only see that wisdom is in your heart as well as in your arms. It is only a year and a half now until you will become a son of the law. You still have many things to learn, but if you learn them well —" As he stepped into the boat and pushed away from the shore, he left Simon thinking very hard about what his father might mean.

The New Teacher

SIMON ran down to the sandy beach where his brother Andrew and his friends, James and John, were mending the fishing nets. He called excitedly, "Rabbi Nathanael's going to Jerusalem to teach in one of the big schools."

"Then we'll have a new teacher?" James asked eagerly.

"Maybe he'll be harder than this one!" Simon's expression changed to worry as this new idea came to him. "Do you suppose he'll make me write a hundred *reshs* and *daleths* after school?"

Simon was not a good writer. He did not like to take the time to make a square corner in the Hebrew "D," which he called *daleth.* His were usually as rounded as the Hebrew "R," and no one could tell which letter he meant. Rabbi Nathanael would not allow careless work in school. Everything had to be perfect. Even though Simon had been in school since he was six years old, he still did not make good letters.

It took the two pairs of brothers only a short

time to spread the news about the new teacher among their friends. In a few hours every boy in the little village of Bethsaida was wondering what the new teacher would be like. Even the girls were curious, although they did not go to school. At least, they would hear him read on the Sabbath when they sat with their mothers behind the carved screen that hid them from the men. Some suspected that Naomi, whose father was the ruler of the synagogue, might know something about the new teacher. But when they asked her questions, she only smiled and said nothing.

Two days before the Sabbath, Rabbi Ben Joseph and his widowed daughter arrived at Bethsaida. He looked much older than Rabbi Nathanael, and Simon was disappointed. He was afraid that an older teacher would be harder to please. So Simon did not pay much attention to the synagogue service next Sabbath, as he sat with his mother and sister. He was wishing this year would hurry by faster so that he would be a son of the law. Then he could sit with his father and the other men in the synagogue. And perhaps he would be old enough to manage a boat by himself.

After the opening verses and prayers had been read, the attendant gave the new teacher a roll containing some of the shorter books of the prophets. As soon as Rabbi Ben Joseph stood up and began to read, Simon liked the sound of his voice. Then the words themselves made him listen more carefully:

"And your sons and daughters shall prophesy,
And your young men shall see visions,
And your old men shall dream dreams."

Then the new teacher sat down and spoke of the children and young men who had been true to the God of Israel. The stories of Samuel and David and Daniel, Simon had heard often from his mother in the evenings at home. But today they seemed like new stories as he heard of how these boys had dreamed of being good and useful men. Perhaps, then, it was right for him to dream about the great things he would do some day even if he did lose his temper sometimes, and did not always get perfect marks in school!

He kept saying the words to himself, "Your young men shall see visions." Those were the very words that he used for the text of his first sermon, years later. At that time he preached to a great number of people in Jerusalem.

School began the following day, and the new teacher soon proved to be more interesting than Rabbi Nathanael. He did not make the pupils spend hours making perfect letters and memorizing lists of names. Instead, he talked about the great men and women of the past and encouraged the boys to ask questions. He told them of the great Leader whom God would send one day to help people. On the day when he read from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah about this great servant and how he must suffer, the boys seated on the floor were very atten-

tive. Then Simon said, "But a good man ought not to have to suffer so much."

His classmates were shocked at such boldness, but the teacher smiled and said nothing.

That evening Simon saw his father and Rabbi Ben Joseph talking together down the street. They must be planning to punish him for speaking out so rudely in school, he thought. When Rabbi Ben Joseph turned to go the other way, and his father came home, Simon saw that he looked pleased. Calling the boy to him he said, "Rabbi Ben Joseph tells me I have a son who thinks of things that puzzle the teachers themselves. He thinks you may be a teacher some day."

Simon was relieved. But he was not thinking of being a teacher. He wanted to be the best fisherman on the lake.

That Troublesome Temper

SIMON lay wide-awake on his thin mattress. Through the small, high window the full moon made a path across his face. Here he was, in his own house tonight, but when the next full moon came around he would be camping along the roadside on the way to Jerusalem. For this year the whole family were going to the Passover Feast. Simon had been there once before, and for months afterward he had told Andrew about the big houses and the streets full of shops as well as all of the interesting things near the Temple itself. He could hardly wait for the time to come.

Seven days before they were to start, Simon's little sister Mary became sick with one of the fevers so common in those days. Soon her mother's careful nursing had made her much better, but not strong enough for the long journey. Simon's father and mother had a talk one night as to what they should do.

"Of course I shall stay with Mary," the mother decided.

"But there will be more work than you can do. It may be that all of us should remain at home," the father suggested.

"If one of the boys were here, I could manage," she ventured to say.

"Andrew has never been to the Feast."

"Simon went one year."

"He is old enough to take responsibility."

It was finally decided that Andrew should go with his father and that Simon should help his mother and sister at home. On the morning when the pilgrims left the village, Simon was nowhere in sight. And later when he returned, his mother did not ask where he had been. She knew that he did not want to see the others leave.

Besides his own duties, Simon had to do some of his sister's work. He did not mind helping to prepare the meals or sweeping the clay floor. Such work was in the house where the other boys could not see him. The work he hated most was bringing water from the village well, for everyone knew that was girls' and women's work. He had never learned to carry a jar easily on his head as Mary did, but he held it awkwardly in his two hands. He tried to go to the well at hours when no one else was there. One day when Mary had been more feverish than usual, water was needed in the early evening when there were many people at the well. Some of the girls there started to tease Simon, but an older woman silenced them. "For shame," she scolded, "when he is man enough to help his sick sister."

Simon felt better after this. He filled his jar to the brim and started home. As he turned the corner to his own street, he met a crowd of boys with James and John among them. The leader began to call Simon names, and tried to knock the jar out of his hands. Some of the cold water splashed on Simon's chest. His face flushed as red as his hair, and he threw the jar, water and all, at his tormentor. The boy dodged, the jar hit John on the shoulder and knocked him down.

Simon was frightened when he saw his friend lying on the ground with his eyes closed. Had he killed John? He ran home and blurted out the story to his mother. She hurried back with him, and they found John sitting up, but a little dazed. He could move his arm, so they knew the bone was not broken, but for weeks there was a sore spot on the shoulder that John did not want anyone to touch. Simon tried in every way to show how sorry he was. He mended John's nets, and only wished that he had money to buy him a gift.

As the time drew near for the return of his father and Andrew, Simon grew more worried. He had been left as the man of the house, and he had not been willing to do all the work that was necessary. If he hadn't complained about carrying the water, he would not have been angry at being teased, and John would not have been hurt. Why did he have such a temper, anyway.

It was not strange that Simon hung back in the shadows when his father brought out the gifts he had purchased in Jerusalem. There was a brass bowl for Mother, a small basket of Jericho dates for Mary, and then a beautiful new headcloth for Simon himself. It was yellow with seven narrow stripes across the top of the head, and five wide ones on each side, three red and two black. It was larger than the one Simon had. It looked almost like a man's head covering. It was lovely, but he did not deserve it. He could not keep back a few tears as he told his father what he had done. Then an idea

came to him, and he asked, "May I give John my new headcloth?"

Hardly waiting for his father's consent, he ran out. And as he ran, the beautiful striped cloth was hugged closely to him.

He came back smiling, wearing the new covering on his head. John would not accept the gift. John surely was a good friend. He was not always getting angry and saying mean things. Simon hoped that John and he would be friends all their lives. He did not know then that some day they would spend wonderful years together with a new Friend, who would help him to control that troublesome temper of his.

Simon Becomes a Man

THE narrow streets of Bethsaida were full of people hurrying to the plain little stone building with a seven-branched candlestick carved over the door. They took quick steps to show that they were glad to go to the synagogue, and because it was God's house they did not talk to each other on the way. There were Zebedee, his wife Salome and their boys James and John. There was neighbor Rachel with little Esther whom Simon had saved from drowning. As Simon stood in the doorway, waiting for his father, he saw also the kind woman who had taken his part when the girls teased him for carrying his sister's water jar.

Simon had good reason to be excited about this service at the synagogue today, for it was not the usual Sabbath meeting. It was a special service held on his twelfth birthday, and he was to become a son of the law. Finally his father was ready after the prayer shawl with its sacred blue tassels had been adjusted properly to his head. Then Simon and Andrew walked along with him while their mother and sister followed at a little distance.

Inside the synagogue it seemed very dark after the white glare of the sunlight outdoors. Up in front, the lamp that was never allowed to go out lighted the faces of the kindly teacher Rabbi Ben Joseph and of the synagogue attendant. Quietly Simon took his place for the first time in the men's sector with his father.

After the brief opening prayers, which Simon in his excitement hardly heard, the attendant beckoned to him to come forward. On the table near by were two little black leather boxes with long leather bands attached to them. In these boxes were verses from the law. When Simon clasped his hands together, the attendant placed one of the boxes on his left arm in the place nearest his heart. The two leather bands fastened to the box were then wound around his arm seven times, three times around his hand, and tied in a knot around his middle finger. The other little box was fastened to his forehead. This was done because one of the commandments said, "And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes."

Simon was told that he must always wear these little prayer boxes when he went to the synagogue and at evening prayers at home. Then Rabbi Ben Joseph gave him his blessing and the service was over. How strange it seemed. Yesterday if Simon had done anything wrong his father would have had to pay for it. But today, after this, he, and not his father, would be brought before the courts and

punished for any wrongdoing. He wanted to talk to someone.

"Let's go down by the dock, Andrew," he suggested to his brother as soon as they reached the house.

"Do you think our parents may need us to help them?" asked the thoughtful Andrew.

"No," replied Simon, "for they will be resting a while in the heat of the day."

It was cooler in the house, but there was no chance to be alone. Down by the dock the sun was high and there was no shade anywhere, so they crawled underneath the dock and lay on the cool stones. They talked until their mother called them to prepare for the guests who might come to congratulate Simon. He had not thought about that.

"That must be why Mother told us not to eat any of the honey cakes she made yesterday," Simon said, as they scrambled up and ran to the house.

Soon the guests came, grown men and women as well as Simon's own playmates. Some brought birthday gifts and some gave the boy more good advice than he could possibly follow. Then when the evening meal came, there was another surprise —a piece of roasted kid which one of the neighbors had prepared.

Twilight began to fall as their father rose from the table and said to Simon and Andrew, "It is time to go out in the boats."

As Simon and Andrew followed him they were puzzled that he led them, not to their own dock but

to Zebedee's. It was strange, too, that James and John were not in one of their father's boats which were just pulling out. They were standing on the dock as if they were waiting for something. As Simon neared the dock, he saw on the farther side a small new fishing boat. Simon looked at Andrew, Andrew looked at him and their father looked at both of them.

"Son, some time ago you thought you were big enough to manage a boat alone. I said you must learn to manage yourself as well as a boat. You have been becoming more and more of a man all the time. Today you took your vows as a son of the law. This is your boat. Andrew, James and John will go with you tonight. You must keep with the others, but you may manage your own boat."

As Simon looked, first at his father and then at the boat, his heart was so full that he could not say a word. Inside he was saying, "I'll be the best fisherman on the lake!" And as he sat down and picked up the oars, the words of Rabbi Ben Joseph in that first sermon flashed through his mind, "And your young men shall see visions." Could fishermen have dreams and visions? And then as the rising full moon lighted Simon's face, his companions saw that it was every bit as determined as were the strong arms that were guiding the boat with firm strokes toward the fishing grounds.

A Message from an Old Friend

SIMON and Andrew were rowing their boatload of fish toward home. The load seemed light to them, so tall and muscular had they grown. It was early morning and the lake was tinted with rose and purple and gold, reflecting the streaks of dawn in the sky overhead. Soon the hot sun would appear over the top of the bare hills on the eastern shore that dropped by steep precipices into the water. Simon liked the western shore of the lake better. He liked the gentle slopes with their vineyards and olive trees; the little white houses clustered together in small villages.

He looked at the speckled fish slithering around in the bottom of the boat. Sometimes he and Andrew could not sell all their catch, because many of the people in Bethsaida caught their own fish. It was different in Capernaum where Zebedee, the father of James and John, had moved with his family. There were many rich people and a garrison of Roman soldiers that were always eager to buy fresh fish.

Simon called back over his shoulder to Andrew, "Doesn't it seem strange not to be fishing with James and John any more?"

"Yes," replied Andrew, resting a minute on his oars. "We surely miss them. Do you remember they went out with us the night Father gave you your own boat?"

"What I remember most," Simon's face grew serious, "is the time I hit John with the water jar, and he wouldn't let me give him my new striped headcloth."

"That was the time I went to the Passover and you stayed at home and had to do Mary's work because she was sick."

"That's a long time ago," Simon answered thoughtfully, "and I haven't conquered my temper yet."

"Shallow water!" cried Andrew, who had been watching the sandy bottom through the clear water. Tucking their tunics into their girdles, they both jumped barelegged into the lake and dragged the heavy boat up on shore. Some of the women were there to meet the boats. Always Simon knew his mother and sister would be there. Of late Esther, whom Simon had once saved from drowning, had joined the others, although she had no father or brother to meet. She was now almost as tall as Simon although she was two years younger. Simon heard her say to his sister Mary, "I think your brothers find the best fish in the lake. Someday they will be leaving us like James and John, and go

to Capernaum where they can sell their fish for more money."

"Oh, no," Mary assured her. "They will always live here in Bethsaida." And in his own mind Simon supposed they would always live in the town where they were born.

Three days later on the evening before the Sabbath, Simon and Andrew were waiting to hear the trumpet in the synagogue blown, announcing that the Sabbath had begun. Suddenly they saw a familiar figure coming up the road. Could it be John? It really was!

Simon rushed to meet him, forgetting that he should be quiet as the Sabbath approached.

"Have you really come to spend Sabbath with us?" he asked.

"Yes, and to bring a message to your father. Is he sitting on the dock now?"

"Yes, but can't you talk with him after we have eaten?" Simon asked, for he wanted to talk to John himself.

"No. I must see him now." John answered; and he left Simon wondering what the important message might be.

In a few minutes the trumpet sounded and Simon's mother came to the doorway to say that the evening meal was ready. Her eyes fell on John.

"Peace be unto thee, my son," she greeted him.

"And to thee peace," John replied. Then he entered the house that was a second home to him, and stood with the others around the table while

the father asked a blessing. After that they sat down to a meal of fish and freshly-baked bread and fruit. But Simon ate very little. He was too intent listening to all that John had to tell them about Capernaum. He heard of the beautiful new synagogue that the friendly Roman centurion, in charge of the garrison of soldiers, had built for the people at his own expense. He heard about the camel-trains of merchants from Egypt and the Far East, which brought strange and beautiful wares in their gaily dyed saddlebags. But most of all he heard that merchants and soldiers and the multitudes of city folk were ready to buy fish and to pay better prices for it than in Bethsaida.

"Never has there been a day that we could not have sold two or three times more fish than we caught," John told them. He had given the message from Zebedee, his father. If anything more was to be said that must be left to the older man. He waited to see what Simon's father would say.

Simon sat tense. He wanted so much to ask questions, but he controlled himself. Then he saw his father turn toward his mother as if he had something of importance to say to her. Yes, he was really going to speak, and before them all.

"Zebedee wants us to help him with his fishing trade in Capernaum," he explained.

"Capernaum?" Simon heard his mother's echo of surprise. "But our home is in Bethsaida."

"Would not our home be where we all lived together?" the father asked gently.

"Fishing with you and James again!" Simon could not resist a whispered comment to John who sat beside him. His father continued, "Remember the words of the wise, 'Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not.' If neighbor Zebedee needs us it may be well for us to go to him. Already there are too many fishermen in this town. Soon Simon and Andrew will be old enough to marry. They will need to earn more. I think we should go to Capernaum."

In the days that followed, Simon was much excited as everyone he met talked about their moving to Capernaum. He could see that the younger boys envied him his chance to live in a city with as many as 15,000 people. But there was sadness in the eyes of his old teacher, Rabbi Ben Joseph.

"Hast thou ever thought of being a teacher of the sacred Scriptures?" the old man asked hesitantly.

"Never a teacher," answered his pupil. "Ever since I can remember I have wanted to be out in a boat. I shall always be a fisherman."

"Then the God of our fathers give rich yield to thy net, and save thee in time of storm," the old man's voice trembled. "But always remember the words of the prophet, 'Your young men shall see visions.' "

" 'And your old men shall dream dreams.' That was in your first sermon at Bethsaida," Simon answered quietly. Never would he forget those words.

The morning of departure arrived. Rolls of bed-

ding were tied on donkey-backs. Dishes and clothing were packed in baskets, one or two for each member of the family to carry. At the last minute, Esther and her mother Rachel came with some little raisin cakes for them.

"This is a sad day for us," said Rachel. "Always you have been such good neighbors to us since my Samuel died." But Esther said nothing.

"Don't fall off the dock again, Esther," Simon warned jokingly, "for I won't be here to save you."

At once Esther turned and ran into the house. Simon was surprised that she did not even say good-by to him. Nor did he understand why his mother and sister smiled at each other. Still puzzled, Simon picked up his baskets and joined his family on the dusty road that led toward their new home.

The New Home

SIMON'S family left Bethsaida, their old home town, early in the morning so as to reach Capernaum before the heat of the day. They looked back now and then, and the little white houses and the bright-colored sails of the fishing boats grew smaller and smaller. Finally they could not see them any longer. But one thing had not changed.

"Mt. Hermon looks as near as ever," Simon spoke as he glanced again at the beautiful snow-capped mountain.

"It makes me think of one of the pilgrim songs," Andrew said, as he began chanting softly: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."

At once the deep voice of his father answered: "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."

As they went on chanting the psalm which had been sung by so many other travelers, Simon's mother and sister also joined in the responses. When they had chanted the last phrase, "The Lord shall

preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore," Simon saw a more contented look steal over his mother's face. He had felt sure she had not wanted to leave her old friends. But he knew that everything was all right when she smiled and said, "The God of our fathers will be with us in Capernaum as he was in Bethsaida."

Meanwhile as they traveled on, the sun grew hotter and the narrow road became more congested with traffic. People came in from the country with baskets of fruit on their heads. Roman soldiers dashed by on horseback with little regard for those who were on foot. One of them upset the basket of ripe olives an old man was carrying to market. Simon helped him pick up from the dusty road the few that were still fit to sell. Once everyone had to leave the road to make room for a camel train of merchants from Damascus.

Finally Simon and Andrew saw the white houses of Capernaum shining in the brilliant sunlight. As they came nearer the city, they saw, high up on the hill by itself, a large white house with pillars.

"That looks like a palace," suggested Andrew.

"That may be the house of the nobleman whom Herod Antipas has put in charge of the city," his father replied.

Just before they reached the city, they came to the junction of the lake road and one from the northwest. Here James and John were waiting for them.

"Peace be to thee and to thy house," they greeted Simon's father.

"And to thee peace," he replied.

"Our mother has food to set before you," James explained. "Her heart is glad at the thought of greeting old friends." Simon saw a smile of relief on his mother's face.

"It will be good to go to your house," his father said. "Then my wife and Mary can rest while I look for a place to live."

When they reached Zebedee's house, they saw him and his wife Salome standing in the door to welcome them. Salome threw her arms about Simon's mother and wept for joy. Then she set about broiling the fish while John helped to place the food on the table. Simon was hungry as he looked at the fresh loaves of bread, the bowls of goat's-milk cheese, the little cakes of chopped nuts and honey, and the cups full of the fresh juice of grapes.

While they ate, the two fathers made the plans for the rest of the day. Zebedee was to show Simon's father a house near by that he thought might suit the family. The women would visit with each other at home, and John and James would show Simon and Andrew the city.

Although Simon was a young man now, he was as excited about going to new places as he had been when he was a boy. So he was all eyes as James and John took him down through the streets, where merchants sat cross-legged under the shade of brown tent-cloth, with their wares spread out before them.

James and John had been there so often that they could tell where many of the things came from. These heavy silks and bronze daggers were from Damascus. Those glass bowls and purple cloth, dyed from the shell of a little mollusk, were from Tyre. The silver necklaces and good-luck charms were from Egypt. In the food booths there were sun-dried fish, olive oil, figs, almonds, red and yellow pomegranates, and oranges. Bleating in a pen were little lambs and kids for those who wished to honor important guests with fresh meat. Farther down the street some of the craftsmen were busy at their trades. The sandal maker, with sandals of all sizes hanging from a cord above his head, was putting red and gold embroidery on a child's sandal. Next door the potter was shaping a water jar on his revolving wheel.

When they reached the end of one of the streets, they found the way blocked by a camel caravan which had halted there in front of a large building. Simon looked up and saw the sign COLLECTOR OF TAXES in the three languages, Greek, Latin and Aramaic. The caravan merchant was repacking in the embroidered saddlebags the articles he had shown to a man seated at a table.

"That is Levi, the tax collector," explained James. "He collects taxes from the foreign merchants and from the fishermen."

"But he looks like a Jew," Simon exclaimed. "Does a Jew collect taxes for the Roman government?" It was hard for him to believe.

"Yes, and many grow rich that way," answered James. "In fact, their name 'publican,' which used to mean one with a public office, now means to most people a thief and a traitor."

As they turned the next corner, Simon saw the large white house with columns, which they had noticed just before they reached the city. It was of marble and richly carved. Before he could ask about it, James had pointed it out as the house of the nobleman who took the king's place in the city. At the foot of the hill were the soldier's barracks. Over the barracks a banner with the Roman eagle on it waved.

"How I hate the Romans!" Simon exploded. "Always taking everything from us and giving nothing in return."

"But there are some good Romans just as there are some bad Jews," John suggested quietly. "Wait until you see the beautiful synagogue that Lucius Quintus, the centurion in charge of the garrison, has given us."

When Simon saw it, he could hardly believe his eyes, it was so much more beautiful than he had dreamed. The building was of white limestone of such fine grain that it looked like marble. Over the three doors were carvings of birds, animals, flowers and palm trees. On the keystone in one of the arches were two eagles facing each other with a jar of manna between them.

"I did not suppose a synagogue would have such fine carvings on it," Simon exclaimed in surprise.

"Doesn't that disobey the second commandment of Moses?"

"The elders decided," explained James, "that since a Gentile was building the synagogue he might use some carvings as long as they were not of men or heathen gods."

As they turned to leave, Simon exclaimed, "The lake!" From the center door of the synagogue the street went straight down the hill to the water's edge. And after all, the lake was the part of the city in which Simon was most interested. Down the street they went to the long row of wharves where the fishing boats were tied, waiting for the time of the nightly catch. Men and boys were washing and mending nets just as they had done at Bethsaida, but there was something new here. On the "Street of the Fishermen" the housetops were covered with racks on which fish were drying.

"We catch so many fish here, that we dry some of them," James pointed out. "People are trying to preserve them with salt as the Egyptians do. Perhaps we shall learn that, too, someday."

And Simon, who was inclined to be a bit boastful, threw out his chest and said confidently, "Someday the sons of Zebedee and the sons of John will have the biggest fish business in Capernaum!"

"That may be," answered Andrew, "but right now I think we should go back to the house to see what needs to be done."

When they reached the home of James and John they found that their mother and sister had already gone to the new house which Zebedee had found for them. It was on the next street, and Simon was glad that his childhood friends were to be near neighbors again. Even his vivid imagination could not foresee half of the wonderful things that would happen to him in this city by the Sea of Galilee.

Bringing Home a Bride

THE years passed swiftly. One morning while Simon and his father were mending their nets, the older man was silent for some time. Then suddenly he let the net fall from his gnarled hands, and looking straight into his son's tanned face, said: "Simon, the years have passed. You are a man now; it is time that you should be taking a wife. Is there any girl in Capernaum that is pleasing to you?"

So that was what had made his father so quiet that morning. Well, it was good that his father was consulting him a little instead of making all the plans as most fathers did.

"No, Father," Simon answered. "I have not thought yet about getting married."

"But I am growing old," his father answered. "And I would have you bring home a bride before I die. I am glad you do not look with favor on any of the maidens in Capernaum. They are strangers to us. Is there anyone in our old home town that you would have for a wife?"

Simon hesitated. Finally he answered slowly,

"There is none I have thought of in that way. The only one I remember very well is Esther who lived next door."

His father nodded with pleasure.

"And she is the very one your mother and I have talked about. We knew her father and her father's father. She is a young woman whose price is above rubies."

Simon remembered that Esther always had helped her mother around the home without complaining. She was a friendly person that everyone liked. And ever since he had saved her from drowning years ago, she had treated him as if he were a hero.

As Simon made no objection, his father assumed that he approved, and went on to explain his plans:

"I have already found an honest go-between, Reuben of the house of Ephraim, and I will ask him tomorrow to go to Bethsaida to talk with Mother Rachel. I hope she will consent to the marriage."

After the go-between had gone to Bethsaida, Simon began to feel really pleased with the idea of having Esther for a wife. Then the thought came to him that Mother Rachel might not give her consent. She might not want such a quick-tempered son-in-law.

Two days later as they were finishing the evening meal, Simon saw Reuben in the open doorway.

"Peace to thee, neighbor John," Reuben greeted Simon's father.

"And to thee peace," Simon's father answered, rising from the table as he spoke. Then he motioned

the guest to a vacant seat by the table, and at once the mother and sister busied themselves getting food for him.

"And what message have you brought me?" Simon's father asked. Reuben smiled with satisfaction.

"Everything is arranged with Mother Rachel and with David her brother-in-law, who will take the father's place and give away the bride. The wedding will take place in three months at the time of the harvest full moon. That will give Esther time to make preparations. The full moon comes on the Sabbath, and David will bring the bride and her maidens here the second day after. I will meet them at the junction of the two roads from the north and lead them to the house."

"Where shall I stay until the bride arrives?" asked Simon. He knew that he must not be at home to see her until the time of the wedding.

Reuben turned to Simon's father. "Is there some friend with whom Simon may stay?" he asked.

"My old friend Zebedee will be glad to have the bridegroom at his house," answered the father. This was the very plan Simon would have chosen for himself.

Two full moons passed and now the moon was becoming full again. James and John and the other friends of the bridegroom had their embroidered wedding garments ready. Some of the girls in the neighborhood were practicing the songs in honor of the bridegroom to be sung when he was escorted

to meet the bride. Reuben, the go-between, who took full charge of the wedding arrangements, was busy buying all the food needed for the marriage feast.

Early in the morning of his wedding day, Simon carried his wedding garment to the house of James and John. He knew that as soon as he left his mother and sister would set to work cleaning the house thoroughly. Then, when the bride had arrived, Reuben would send a messenger for Simon. The message did not come until after sunset. Then at once Simon and his friends started out. First were the musicians playing on their reed pipes and clash-

ing their cymbals. Next came the girls who would sing when they reached the house. Last came Simon himself, wearing a new embroidered garment and a garland of flowers, accompanied by his friends, all in festive dress. As they neared the house, the girls began singing the songs in praise of the bridegroom. Then out of the house came the bride's friends with oil lamps to light the bridegroom's way into the house.

As Simon passed through the doorway, he saw the table heaped high with food for the wedding feast. At one end, under a small canopy sat a girl with many jewels. A veil was over her face. Beside her was an empty bench, and to this the friends of the bride escorted him. He knew Esther was beside him although he could not see through her thick veil. He must not speak to her until the proper time. He looked up at the silk canopy over him and remembered that his father had told him this canopy was a reminder of olden days when the groom took his bride to a new tent for their home. Now they would have a room in his father's house, especially cleaned and decorated for them.

At last the guests were all seated. Then Reuben who had charge of the wedding announced that the feast would begin. For a moment the crowd was silent as they all looked at the bride and groom seated under the beautiful canopy. The food was passed to them first. Simon saw Esther lift her veil. Then, solemnly they each took a morsel of food and ate it together as a sign that they had promised

to be true to each other. This was their wedding ceremony.

Then the songs and laughter began again. Now that they were married Simon was free to look at Esther. He was proud of her. Esther smiled shyly at him. Then all at once he understood why she had not wanted to say good-by, years ago, when he left Bethsaida to go to Capernaum. It was because she had liked him. Now she was no longer a childhood playmate. She was his wife. He would try to be as good a husband to her as his father had been to his mother.

The Desert Preacher

SIMON and Andrew were on their way to the Roman garrison with large baskets of fish they had caught the night before. Suddenly as they turned a corner, they found the market place filled with a crowd of men, women and children gazing spellbound at a man with long hair and a rough camel's-hair garment. He was just leaving the market place, but he turned and called out once more, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" Simon caught a glimpse of the speaker's strong, rugged face. In his eyes was a gleam as if he saw something others did not see, and wanted them to know about it, too.

"Who is that man?" Simon asked one of the onlookers.

"He calls himself John the Baptist," the man replied. "He preaches about some new kingdom of God and baptizes his converts in the Jordan River."

"Does he live near the Jordan?" Simon persisted.

"Yes, somewhere in the wilderness region this side of the river."

"Simon, we must go on to the garrison," Andrew

interrupted. "The commander will not be pleased if we are late with our fish."

"Yes, Andrew." Simon took a step, then called back over his shoulder, "How will we find this baptizer?"

"By following the crowd," came the quick answer.

So it came to pass that the following morning Simon and Andrew, James and John started out to find the new preacher. They had arranged to have four others take their places in the fishing boats that night, for they knew they could not go and come back the same day. As they followed the edge of the lake, kingfishers flew over their heads, and a stork stood on one leg in the tall reeds by the shore. They passed scattered houses, but no villages of any size until they came to Magdala.

A few miles south of Magdala was Tiberias, the city that every good Jew despised. For there Herod Antipas had dug up a graveyard to build the foundations of the city. He had built a gorgeous palace for himself and a large race course where Roman games were held. As Simon and his friends saw the rough fellows that thronged the streets, they hurried to be well out of such company.

From there on, as they neared the Jordan River, they began to see thistles and burdocks growing by the path instead of pink flax and yellow chrysanthemums. They were nearing the Jordan wilderness. At sunset they ate a supper of bread and dried fish from their goatskin bags, and then went to sleep under the stars using their long robes for a covering.

Early in the morning they followed the crooked, muddy river, taking care not to walk too near the overhanging clay banks lest the soft soil give way and they find themselves in the muddy river below. After a few miles, as they came around a bend, Simon caught sight of bright colored garments in the distance.

"Look! There are the crowds!" he called to his companions.

"Can that bright thing shining in the sun be a soldier's helmet?" asked Andrew. Simon shook his head. "No Roman soldier would be listening to a prophet," he said.

But Simon was wrong, for when they reached the crowd they found soldiers and taxgatherers there as well as ordinary men and women.

"Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance!" they heard John thunder forth, and a man in the crowd asked, "What shall we do, then?"

At once John answered, "Let the one who has two coats share with him who has none."

Then, as another man arose, there were whispers of "publican" through the crowd. But he was too much in earnest to notice that he was being called a bad name.

"Master," he asked respectfully, "what shall *we* do?" And the quick answer came, "Do not collect more than the right amount of taxes."

Simon could hardly believe it when a tall Roman soldier also stepped forward and asked, "And what shall *we* do?"

Again John had a ready answer. "Do not accuse people falsely, and be content with your pay."

After he had finished preaching, John baptized some who repented of their misdeeds, and the crowd began to leave. Then Simon and his companions had their chance to talk with John alone. As they heard him tell of a new kingdom of God which a greater One than John would establish, their hearts were thrilled. Before they left, they had pledged themselves to help John in his work.

From that time on, whenever they could be away a day and a night from their fishing, they would spend the time with John, helping him and learning more of this new Kingdom. Esther was interested, too, in all that Simon could tell her and she did not complain when he was away from home to be with John.

One day when the four were with John the Baptist, Simon decided to catch some fish for their supper. He did not tell the others just how far up the river he would go for he did not know himself.

Again and again he dipped his small hand-net into the yellow waters of the Jordan without success. He was used to the clear water of the Sea of Galilee where he could see the fish coming through the water. Farther and farther north he went till he was nearer the lake and the water was clearer. But it was late afternoon by the time he was satisfied with his catch and turned back. As he neared the place where he had left the others that morning he heard someone calling him.

"Simon! Simon!" It was Andrew's voice.

"Andrew! Here am I!" he answered. Then as he came around a clump of tall growth, he saw Andrew running toward him.

"Simon, we have found him! The Messiah!" Excitedly Andrew finished his story. A stranger had come toward them, he told Simon, and John the Baptist had pointed to him saying, "Behold the Lamb of God!" At once he and John had followed this Stranger and spent several hours with him. Then Andrew exclaimed, "You will have to see for yourself how wonderful He is!"

As they reached the place where John was staying, Simon saw Jesus, the One about whom Andrew had told him. Jesus spoke to him as if he had been waiting for him, "Simon, son of John, you shall be called Peter." The name meant "rock." Could Jesus depend on him to be a rock! Could he really learn to be that kind of man in spite of his changeable ways and quick temper, he wondered. At least Simon Peter knew as he looked into that kind, strong face, that there was someone who would help him—someone he could love and trust all his life. And he knew by the look on the face of John the Baptist that his former leader was pleased.

Peter Entertains Jesus

IT WAS Sabbath morning in Capernaum. The sun beat fiercely on the cracks of the clay soil, and down by the lake the striped sails of the fishing boats hung limp. It was the kind of day when some people stayed away from church. But Jesus and his four disciples, Peter, Andrew, James and John, were sitting in their usual places in the synagogue that morning. They sat downstairs in the men's part of the house. Usually Peter's wife, Esther, and her mother were there, too, seated in the women's gallery behind the carved screen that partially concealed them from the eyes of the men. Today they were not present. The family had invited Jesus to dinner, and Esther's mother had insisted on preparing the meal herself. Peter and Esther had finally consented, but Esther had remained at home to keep her mother from working too hard. For Mother Rachel was growing old, and in the dry, hot season, she often had attacks of fever.

After the prayers and the chanting of the psalms, Peter heard the ruler of the synagogue invite any

teachers present to speak to the people. At once Jesus arose and walked up the aisle to the reading desk. There was a great hush when Jesus sat down and began to explain the meaning of the sacred words. Some leaned forward on their benches as if they did not want to miss a single word. Suddenly there was a shouting from the rear of the room that made everyone turn around to see who dared to interrupt the service.

"What have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth?" A wild-looking man was shouting and shaking his fist. Immediately Peter saw two strong men seize the man, while all over the synagogue the people murmured that it was an "unclean spirit." For in those days the Jews, like many others, thought sickness was caused by a bad spirit inside a sick person.

As the two men took hold of the sufferer, Peter saw Jesus get up and come down the aisle. He placed both hands on the man's shoulders, looked straight into his eyes and smiled. Then he spoke firmly, "Be silent, and leave that man!"

Once more the man cried out, and then Peter saw him look at Jesus with a puzzled expression on his face. His poor, confused brain could not remember when anyone had spoken kindly to him. Slowly his eyes lost their frightened look, and he sat down quietly in his seat again.

When the service was over, the four disciples stood close to Jesus to keep him from being crushed by the crowd. Almost everyone wanted to see this

wonderful new teacher; a few of the older men in richly embroidered robes stood off at a distance, scowling and whispering to each other. As Peter saw the look on their faces he wondered if they were jealous of Jesus.

Later as his guests neared Peter's house, Esther ran out to meet them.

"I have been watching for you. Mother is ill with the fever. She is lying on her bed, but she says she must get up to finish preparing the meal for Jesus." Jesus smiled.

"Show me where she is, Daughter."

Esther led the way to the inner room where her mother was lying on her mattress. Stooping over her, Jesus took her by the hand and gently lifted her up.

Peter saw Mother Rachel smile. The worried look left her face. "The fever has left me," she said. "Now we will finish the meal together."

That afternoon was one that Peter and Andrew never forgot. As Jesus sat in their home and talked with them, it seemed as if they had known him for years. They listened as he told them about God and how God wanted them to live. They asked him questions, and he answered with words that they could understand. Almost before they knew it, it was sunset and the Sabbath was over.

As soon as the sun had set, Peter saw a long line of people coming up the street toward his house. He saw a bent old man hobbling along, leaning on a boy's shoulder. Then there was a blind man tap-

ping with a stick, and a mother carrying a sick child in her arms.

Jesus came to the doorway and met them. He laid his hands upon the sick, he spoke kindly to them, and one by one they went away healed. It was long after dark before the last one left. After James and John had gone, and Jesus was resting in the guest room, Peter and Andrew sat and talked about the wonderful things they had seen that day.

"Did you notice," asked Peter, "that Jesus did some of the things that we read about in the books of the prophets? He preached to the poor, he opened the eyes of the blind."

"Yes," replied Andrew.

Peter thought of what he had seen and of what John the Baptist had said about Jesus. It looked as if John had been right and the Messiah really had come.

The Choosing of the Twelve Helpers

EVER since the Sabbath when Peter had entertained Jesus in his own home, he had seen that his leader was growing more popular every day. Wherever Jesus went, crowds gathered to be healed or to hear him tell stories. It was plain that Jesus needed helpers. But if Peter had had the choosing, he never would have chosen some of the men that Jesus finally called to be with him.

One morning as they were going along the streets of Capernaum, they came to one of the buildings Peter and Andrew had noticed on their first day in Capernaum. It was the one marked COLLECTOR OF TAXES. Peter was passing by the hated tax collector as rapidly as he could, when he heard Jesus call, "Levi, son of Alphaeus, follow me!" Peter was amazed. Surely Jesus did not want a publican for a disciple. Peter was even more surprised when the tax collector called an assistant to take care of his work, and at once went along with Jesus. Later

this same Levi, to whom was given the name Matthew, held a feast in his house so that some of his friends might meet Jesus. The disciples were invited also. There, at the same table, Peter ate with publicans, a thing he had never done in all his life before.

As the days went by, Peter noticed that there were more people coming from a distance to see Jesus. Many of them he could recognize by their costumes. There were wealthy Jews from Jerusalem who had copied Roman styles in dress. There were shepherds from Idumea, the old home of Esau. There were rich merchants in purple silk from Tyre on the seacoast to the northwest.

One day when there were many of these foreigners, the crowd was too dense to see or hear Jesus well. He borrowed a boat and rowed out a short distance from shore, where his clear voice was carried over the water. After the people had gone home, Jesus went out to the hills west of the city. Peter and some others followed him. When they reached the hillside, Jesus started up the slope. Peter would have gone on, too, but John said, "I think Jesus wants to be alone."

"Then I will stay awake until he comes back," Peter promised. But after an hour of waiting in the dark, he fell asleep. At daybreak Peter awoke to see Jesus coming down the hillside. Whether he had been sleeping or talking to his Father, he looked rested. Then he called his friends together and announced that he would choose twelve to be his special

helpers. Peter listened eagerly to the list of names.

His own came first, then that of Andrew, his brother, and their friends, James and John. Next came Philip who was also from Peter's home town, Bethsaida. The next one, Bartholomew, Peter did not know much about. Matthew was Levi, the tax collector. Thomas, Peter already had discovered, liked to decide things for himself instead of believing what everyone told him. There was another James, the son of Alphaeus and Mary. He had already been nicknamed "Little James" so that they would know him from James the son of Zebedee. Then came Judas, the brother of James, and the fiery Simon, who belonged to the Zealots, the party that wanted to drive the Romans out of the country. The twelfth name Peter heard Jesus announce was Judas Iscariot, a man from a small village about twenty miles south of Jerusalem. All of the other disciples were from Galilee. Peter and the others must have thought of Judas as an outsider.

After choosing his twelve disciples, Jesus gathered them about him on the hillside, and began to explain some things about this new kingdom of God that he had come to establish. Peter eagerly drank in every word that Jesus spoke. As Jesus described the character of those who might belong to this Kingdom, Peter could believe that it was good to be humble and merciful and pure in heart. But it did not seem possible that you could ever be happy when people said mean things about you. He was sure he never would be able to measure up to that

standard. He listened intently as Jesus quoted from the old laws that Peter knew so well.

"Thou shalt not kill." To himself Peter said, "I have kept that law." But what else was Jesus saying? That one who was angry with his brother ought to be brought before a judge in court. Those were hard words for one with Peter's quick temper.

Finally Jesus explained the law of love. They were to love their enemies as well as their friends. And Jesus gave the reason: "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even publicans the same?"

Publicans! Peter's thoughts ran fast. Did that mean that he was not to hate a publican? Did it mean that he should love Matthew? Well, he might try to be a little more friendly with him for Jesus' sake.

As they started back toward the city, Peter caught hold of the border of Matthew's flowing sleeve.

"Matthew," he asked, "shall we walk together?"

Matthew turned in amazement. He knew some of the disciples had resented having a publican in their group.

"Yes, Peter," he answered. He did not know how to say just what it meant to be treated like a friend. They walked on a few steps without speaking. Then Matthew said thoughtfully, "Those were wonderful words. I shall never forget them. They ought to be written down in a book so that our children and our children's children could have them, too."

As Peter and Matthew walked on together, they could not know that many years later those words, which we call "The Sermon on the Mount," would be written down. But the two disciples, as they walked and talked together, did know that they were becoming friends because they both loved the same friend, Jesus.

Peter Meets a Good Roman

PETER and the other disciples walked along the hot, dusty road toward Capernaum. This was after Jesus had chosen his twelve disciples in the hills outside the city. At the head of the line, Peter shaded his eyes from the glare of the sun as he strained to see the men who were approaching. From their slow, heavy walk and the long robes that younger men would have tucked into their girdles, Peter decided that they were elderly men. In a few minutes he recognized them.

"Look, Matthew," he said to his new companion. "Here come three of the synagogue elders. Do you suppose that they are going to make trouble for Jesus?"

"I hope not," Matthew answered doubtfully. He had already heard Jesus criticized for breaking the Sabbath. That was because Jesus let them pick some grain to eat, as they walked through the wheat fields when they were hungry.

As the elders drew near, one stepped forward. His right hand touched his heart, his lips and his

forehead in salutation, as he said, "Peace be unto thee!"

"And to thee peace!" Peter answered. Then the spokesman continued, "We would speak to Jesus, the Healer."

Jesus heard their request and stepped forward. "Here am I," he said simply.

At once the elders saluted him. Then the leader made known his errand:

"We bring word from Lucius Quintus, the centurion. His favorite slave is paralyzed and cannot move. He begs that you will heal him. Although he is of a heathen nation, he is worthy of help. For he has always been kind to us, and he himself built our beautiful synagogue. We beg of you that you will help him," the elder concluded earnestly.

"Show me the shortest way to his house," Jesus answered. The elders turned around and went with Jesus and his disciples to the city. Avoiding the crowded bazaar streets, they walked through narrow streets that even Peter did not know. Soon they were at the foot of the hill on which stood the House of the Marble Pillars, the home of the nobleman who ruled the city.

"The centurion's house is just below the House of the Marble Pillars," the leader of the elders explained. Peter had a sudden thought. Probably the centurion had heard how Jesus healed the nobleman's son a few months before. They had started to climb the hill when they saw the centurion himself approaching. His bronze helmet gleamed in

the sunlight, and the mantle fastened to his left shoulder swung back and forth with his long strides. He went down on one knee and bowed low as he told Jesus of the illness of his favorite slave. Then he begged Jesus to cure him: "I am not worthy that you should come under my roof. But only say the word, and my servant shall be healed."

Peter saw the surprise on Jesus' face, as if he could not believe that a Roman would trust him so completely. Perhaps the centurion read Jesus' thoughts, for he at once tried to reassure him. He explained that just as he could give a soldier orders, and the thing would be done, he knew Jesus could give orders and have them obeyed.

Jesus looked at the centurion with surprise and gratitude. Then he said, "Go your way. As you have believed, so shall it be done." Back up the hill went the centurion, and the disciples started on their way home. They had not gone far before they heard quick footsteps behind them. Turning, Peter saw a boy in the short tunic of a slave. As soon as the slave spied Peter, he held up his hand as if he wished to speak.

"Master, someone wants you," Peter spoke. Jesus turned, and the slave, panting for breath, fell at his feet. As soon as he could speak he said, "Greetings and thanks from my master Lucius Quintus. The slave who was sick can walk again."

After the messenger had gone, Jesus was still thinking about the faith of the Roman centurion. It was a faith greater than any that had been shown

by the Jews who called themselves God's people. Finally he said, "I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness."

Peter looked up quickly at the synagogue leaders who were still with them. It would be hard for them to believe what Jesus said. Could it be possible that some Gentiles would be in heaven with the good men of old, and some Jews would not be there? It was a strange teaching.

Feeding the Hungry

THE people crowded about Jesus day and night, until sometimes he and the disciples could not take time to eat. They were all glad one morning when Jesus said, "Let us go to some quiet place and rest awhile."

They started across the lake, but the wind was against them and it took longer than usual to row the four miles to the opposite shore. Meanwhile the people whom they had left noticed the direction in which Jesus was going. They decided to walk around the upper end of the lake and meet Jesus. As they passed other villages, they told everyone they met where they were going, and men, women, and children joined them. But the path along the edge of the lake was so hidden by thorn trees and myrtles, that the disciples in the boat did not see that a great crowd was gathering to meet them.

Finally, when the disciples' boat had been drawn up on the beach, and Peter pushed through the undergrowth to the open space beyond, he had an unwelcome surprise. Instead of the restful hillside

with green grass and spring flowers everywhere, he saw the gay colors worn by hundreds of people who were waiting for Jesus. Peter's first thought was to drive them away. He felt that Jesus was too tired to see them. But just as he started to suggest this, he was silenced by the look of loving sympathy on his Master's face. Peter heard him remark as he gazed over the crowd, "They are like sheep without a shepherd."

Then Jesus began to talk to the people; he told them beautiful and wonderful things about God, and healed the sick. The afternoon passed, and Peter heard hungry children crying softly. Their mothers had been so eager to hear Jesus that they had not thought to bring food with them. But Jesus had heard the crying children, too. He called Philip to him and asked, "Where shall we buy bread for the people to eat?"

Philip first thought of the big expense, for the disciples did not have much money. He shook his head. Even if they went to the nearest village and spent as much as forty dollars for bread, it would not be enough for such a crowd. Then Peter heard his brother Andrew speak up. "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fishes. But what good will that do for such a crowd?"

Jesus answered him by saying, "Have the people sit down in groups of fifty and of a hundred." As the people sat down in squares that spread far out over the hillside, their bright garments made Peter think of so many flower beds.

Peter and the other disciples could not then fully understand just what Jesus did. One minute the boy with the loaves and fishes was standing by Andrew, excited over his chance to help Jesus. Then Peter bowed his head as Jesus took the food and asked God's blessing upon it. When Peter looked up he saw that as Jesus broke the loaves there was an abundance for the hungry crowd. And when all had been satisfied, someone in the crowd called out, "Hail, King Jesus!"

Then the crowd took up the cry and shouted many things like, "God save the king! God save the king!"

Peter was thrilled to hear the people call Jesus their King. He saw that the other disciples were excited, too. But in the midst of the shouting and confusion, he noticed that Jesus had slipped away quietly, and was going up the hillside alone.

Simon Peter saw the face of the other Simon fall in disappointment, yet no one started to follow Jesus. After a time the amazed crowd left. Puzzled and disappointed, the disciples got into the boat and started home.

Peter's Wise Answer

AFTER Jesus had refused to be an earthly king, Peter could see that the crowds were not coming to him in such great numbers. He would never forget the day when some who had seemed to be loyal to Jesus, had suddenly left him. Peter could still hear the sadness in Jesus' voice when he asked them, his twelve disciples, "Will you leave me, too?"

Peter had answered immediately, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Not only were less people coming to hear Jesus, but he seemed to be avoiding crowds. He had even spent a short time outside Jewish territory in the region of Tyre and Sidon by the Great Sea, which we now call the Mediterranean. Then he had taken the road which led from Sidon to Damascus, past the Lebanon Mountains. East of the mountains he had turned south to the Greek cities, where the man he had healed of an evil spirit had already told about him. Here again crowds came to him for healing. He was seeking a quiet place where he could spend some time teaching the disciples.

Such a place they found at Caesarea Philippi, about twenty-five miles north of Capernaum. Here one of the streams that flows into the Jordan River comes from a cave hung with maidenhair fern. Along the banks of the little stream, broad sycamores and wild grape vines give shade. And above all towers snow-capped Mt. Hermon.

In this beautiful spot, the disciples spent many happy days, listening to Jesus and asking him questions. Peter was glad of a chance to think things over. He had not had a good chance since the nights long ago when he and Andrew were out in the boat, waiting silently for the fish to fill their great net. He thought of all that old Rabbi Ben Joseph had taught him when he was a boy about the great leader that the prophets had promised. He remembered how John the Baptist had said he was not fit to remove the sandals of the One who would come after him.

Yes, more and more Peter was thinking that Jesus must be the Messiah. He wondered if the others were as sure.

One morning when Jesus and four of the disciples had gone to the nearest village for food, Peter and the rest of the disciples fell to talking about this.

"If he is the Messiah, why does he not tell the people?" Simon the Zealot asked impatiently.

"And drive Herod from his throne?" added Judas.

"But do not his works show he is the Messiah?" asked James.

"Some of the things he has done I never would have believed," said Thomas, "if I had not seen them with my own eyes."

"And is it not another proof of his greatness," suggested John, "that he would heal the Gentile child of Syrophoenicia?"

"Surely that fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaiah, 'The people which sat in darkness have seen a great light,'" commented Matthew, who could quote from the sacred writings fluently. Peter wondered what Andrew would say. Finally he spoke: "Ever since the first day when John the Baptist pointed out Jesus, I have hoped that he would be the Great Leader of our people. But," Andrew continued, "perhaps he is a better kind of leader than we have dreamed of."

"But how can he do anything unless he becomes king?" Judas asked impatiently.

"Silence! They are coming back," warned Peter who had just spied the five coming around a bend in the road.

After a noonday meal of bread, goat's milk cheese and raisins, they all rested in the cool shade of the great rocks through which little streams trickled down over ferns. Late in the afternoon Jesus called them together. They sat on the ground in a large circle and waited for him to speak.

"Who do men say that I am?" The question surprised them. Then one after another answered, "John the Baptist risen from the dead." "Elijah." "One of the prophets."

Jesus gazed intently upon them as if he would read their thoughts. "But who do you say I am?"

It was almost as though he knew they had been talking about it. The disciples looked at one another. Who should speak first? But there was only a second's pause before Peter leaned forward and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The look on Jesus' face made Peter think of days in school when he had given Rabbi Ben Joseph the right answer. But he did not see why Jesus should warn them not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. Peter was still more puzzled when Jesus went on to tell them how He would be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the scribes, and would finally be killed. Their leader suffer and be killed? Peter could not bear such a thought. He reached out and seized Jesus by the hand, "Master! That must never happen to you!"

But Jesus' reply was a strange, sharp one, "Get behind me, Tempter!"

They wondered. Could it be that Jesus, too, dreaded the thought of suffering and death?

Then Jesus said quietly, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall find it."

That night after Peter lay down under the stars he did not fall asleep at once, but was awake a long time thinking. Finally he decided that if Jesus must die, then he would die with him.

Friend of the Young

FOR several months Jesus and his disciples had been working in the province of Perea, east of the Jordan River. Many of the people there had heard John the Baptist's preaching, and it seemed to Peter that perhaps they appreciated Jesus more than did many of the people of Galilee. Then the seventy of his followers whom Jesus sent out, two by two, had brought back glowing reports. It reminded Peter of those early days in Galilee when the multitudes had come to see and hear Jesus.

One afternoon while the disciples were talking with Jesus, Peter saw a group of women coming toward Jesus with babies in their arms, while other small children clung to their mothers' long robes. Some of the other disciples had seen the women, too. They did not think Jesus would want to be bothered with small children and they rebuked the mothers for coming. Peter saw the disappointment in the faces of the mothers as they started to turn away. But Jesus had seen all this, too, and he called sternly to the men, "Do not drive those mothers away!"

Then, beckoning the frightened children to him, he smiled on them and said in a clear voice that all could hear, "Let the little children come unto me: forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."

Then one by one, he picked them up in his arms and gently placed his hand on each child's head and breathed a prayer of blessing upon every one of them. Peter had been surprised before when Jesus took time to teach women. None of the rabbis did that. And now Peter knew that Jesus loved and honored children. Then he realized that even as great and powerful a person as Jesus could also be kind and loving.

A few days after this, Peter had a striking example of Jesus' interest in young people. We cannot tell just how old the young man was, but he was probably not yet twenty. From the way he ran toward Jesus he might have been even younger, but as he came near Peter could see that his eyes looked old and dissatisfied. Respectfully he kneeled before Jesus, his richly embroidered robe trailing in the dust.

"Good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" he asked.

Immediately Peter heard Jesus answer, "Why do you call me good. There is none good but God." Then Jesus named one commandment after another, and the young man answered, "Master, all these I have kept since I was a child."

At these words Peter saw Jesus look lovingly upon this fine, young man. It must be that Jesus wanted

him very much for a disciple. But Jesus' voice was sad as he answered, "One thing you lack. Go, sell all you have and give to the poor; and you shall have wealth in heaven; and come, follow me."

The young man looked down. He was thinking. Peter could see how soft and white his hands were, not brown and calloused like his own. He wondered if the young man were comparing his own rich, purple garment with Peter's faded one. Then he heard the young man sigh, and turn away slowly. Peter wanted to reach out and pull him back. He wanted to tell the young man how much happier he would be to have Jesus for a friend than to have all of his money and fine clothes.

Then one of those strange thoughts came to Peter. Were they better off after all? He had left a fishing business that paid well, to walk miles from one village to another to help people who did not appreciate what Jesus or the disciples did. Bluntly he spoke his thoughts, "We have left our all, and have followed you."

At once Jesus answered, "There is no man who has left house, or brother, . . . or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but shall receive a hundred times as much, now in this present world, . . . and in the world to come eternal life." Peter was ashamed. Of course he would not be that young man if he could. Once more he was proud to be a friend of Jesus. He was glad to be a helper in this new kingdom where children and young people and women as well as men could be followers of a great Leader.

The Passover Supper

IT WAS Thursday evening of the week of the Jewish Passover. The Sabbath previous, as Jesus with his disciples came into Jerusalem, great crowds had come to meet him; they welcomed him by cutting branches from the trees and waving them, then they spread their cloaks in the road before him as a carpet over which he might ride. They had cried out, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" During the next two days, while Jesus was teaching in the Temple, Peter knew that some of the Jewish leaders were trying to get him to say things which they could use against him later. All the third day Jesus stayed quietly in Bethany with his good friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Then came the day of the Passover Feast, but Jesus had said nothing to his disciples about it. Had he forgotten to make plans?

Finally one of them asked him, "Where do you want us to go to prepare the Passover?"

Calling Peter and John to him he told them to go ahead into the city and follow a man carrying a

water jar. When the man went into a house, they were to ask for the owner, who would show them a guest-chamber in which to make ready the Passover Supper.

Peter and John looked at each other in amazement. Men did not usually carry water jars. Women and girls did that work. Why had Jesus not given the name of the owner of the house? Could it be that he did not want someone to know beforehand where they were going?

When Peter and John reached the city gate, they looked about for a man with a water jar. There he was, in a slave's short tunic, leaning against the city wall, the large water jar balanced on his shoulder. He scanned the faces of all the people who came through the gate. Peter went up to him and said, "We have a message for your master."

Immediately the slave set down his jar on the ground and saluted them. Then replacing the jar on his shoulder, he led the way through winding, narrow streets to a broader one where many of the houses were two stories high. The slave turned into one of these, where a man in a rich, yellow robe with an outer cloak of deep red was waiting in the doorway. Even before Peter made known his errand, the kindly host led the way to a large upper room with tables and banquet couches prepared for thirteen guests.

As Peter and John went out to buy the bread and wine and bitter herbs for the supper, they wondered about this good friend of Jesus.

"He seems to be a man of wealth," suggested Peter. "Do you suppose he is a secret disciple?"

"He may be," John replied. "There must be many others among the leaders of the people."

The two disciples had everything ready when Jesus and the other ten disciples reached the house late in the afternoon. As soon as they had taken their places at the table, Jesus stood up and threw off his long outer robe. Then he took a towel and a basin of water, and began to wash the dust from the feet of each of his disciples. Peter was astonished. This was the work of a slave! He never would have dreamed of doing such a thing himself. Why was Jesus doing it? Then he saw that Jesus was coming to him next.

"Lord, you are not going to wash *my* feet," he declared. Then, distressed because the Master was doing the work of a slave, he protested, "You must never wash my feet!"

But Jesus answered, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me."

That changed things for Peter. He wanted to please Jesus. Eagerly he cried out, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

Again Jesus' reply puzzled him: "He that has bathed needs only to wash his feet. And you are clean, but not all of you."

Peter was relieved a few minutes later when Jesus explained why he had washed their feet, "For I have given you an example," he said, "that you should do as I have done unto you."

As the meal continued, Peter knew that Jesus was troubled about something. He did not have to wait long to find out what it was. Soon Jesus said, "One of you who is now eating with me will betray me."

Who could do such a thing! Peter was not the only one who was shocked. Everyone knew that eating together was a sign of friendship. One by one they asked Jesus, "Is it I, Lord? Is it I?"

One of the disciples begged Jesus to tell them who it was that would betray him. The disciple asked his question just at the time when the piece of bread dipped in the dish of bitter herbs was to be passed around the table. Jesus dipped a piece of bread into the dish and said, "It is the one to whom I give this." Then he passed the bread to Judas Iscariot, and spoke directly to him, "What you do, do quickly!" Immediately Judas went out into the dark night. Peter and the other disciples wondered just what Jesus meant. Had he sent Judas to buy something more for the feast? Whatever it was, it seemed as if Jesus did not look so troubled after Judas had gone.

When the Passover meal was finished, Jesus did not rise at once to sing the closing hymn. Instead he took bread, gave thanks, and broke it into small pieces. He gave a piece to each one of the disciples, saying as he did so, "Take, eat; this is my body."

Then he took the cup and passed it around, saying, "Drink ye all of it. This is my blood . . . which is shed for many."

Peter did not like to hear Jesus speak of his death. He did not want Jesus to die. Yet he had known for some time that Jesus was in danger, and Peter had carried a short sword in its sheath inside the folds of his girdle. He meant to protect Jesus if it were necessary. Suddenly he heard his Master say that they would all desert him. Boldly Peter spoke, "Though all shall desert you, I will not."

Quietly, sadly, Jesus answered, "Before the cock crow twice, even you shall deny me three times."

It was time for the closing psalm of the Passover Feast. Together they all chanted, "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever."

Then Jesus led the way out of the city to the Mount of Olives, where he often went to pray.

Peter's Sad Mistake

THE Passover full moon lighted the path for Jesus and the eleven disciples as they passed through the city gate, crossed the dry bed of the Kidron, and started up the slope to the Mount of Olives. On the hillside was an enclosed piece of ground called the Garden of Gethsemane. At the entrance, Jesus asked the three who had been closest to him, Peter, James and John, to come with him. The others were to wait for him a short distance away.

After they entered the garden, the three friends were asked to keep watch while Jesus prayed. He went a little way from them, fell on his face and prayed again and again in words that Peter never could forget: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

As Peter heard the agony in Jesus' voice, he was more than ever determined to watch and protect Jesus. But the soft rustling of the olive leaves was like a lullaby, he was tired, and he fell asleep. The next thing he knew, Jesus was bending over him

and saying, "Simon, could you not keep watch one hour?"

Twice after that Jesus came and found the three disciples fast asleep. But when he heard the noisy mob coming he roused them.

As Peter stumbled to his feet, he saw a crowd with swords and torches bursting into the quiet garden. One stepped out of the group. His torch flared up. Peter saw that it was Judas. He saw him run up to Jesus. He heard him call out, "Hail, Master!"

Peter was shocked and very angry when Judas pressed forward and kissed Jesus. At once the soldiers advanced and arrested Jesus. Peter tried to protect his Master; he pulled his sharp sword from its sheath and slashed out madly. The blade struck a servant of the high priest and cut his ear.

"Put up your sword!" Jesus commanded.

Peter obeyed and put his sword back into its sheath. Then he saw Jesus reach out and gently touch the wounded ear. Once more Peter had tried to help Jesus in the wrong way. Now he felt helpless, but he would follow the soldiers and try to make some plan to rescue Jesus.

It was nearly midnight when the soldiers brought Jesus to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest. Peter did not enter the hall where the Jewish leaders were questioning Jesus. He stayed outside in the courtyard and watched and listened. The night was chilly, and those who were waiting outside had kindled a fire. Peter stood near and warmed him-

self. Suddenly he realized that one of the maids in the group was staring at him.

"You were with the Nazarene, Jesus," she said.

Peter felt as if he were caught in a trap. He was terribly frightened. Before he realized how cowardly it was to lie and desert his Master, he was saying, "I do not know what you are talking about."

Then another maid who saw his confusion also accused him of having been with Jesus. He found himself saying, "No," again. But as he spoke he forgot that he pronounced his words as a Galilean and not as the people of Jerusalem.

Then still another one of the group taunted him for being a follower of Jesus and added, "Your speech betrays you."

Again Peter's tongue had thrust him into trouble. Then he became more desperate and even denied that he knew Jesus. He could do nothing except hide in the darkness.

Torn with remorse at the wrong, weak thing he had done, Peter heard jeers and shouts from the courtroom. Looking up, he saw Jesus being led out between two Roman soldiers. Jesus looked at Peter with such kindness that Peter could not stand it. It would not have hurt so much if Jesus had looked angry, but he did not. Peter rushed out of the courtyard into the night, weeping as though his heart would break. Out in the night he heard a sound that startled him and made him remember the words of Jesus, "Before the cock crow, you shall three times deny me."

Will Jesus Forgive Peter?

In the early hours of that Friday morning, Peter wandered through deserted streets of the city, trying to keep away from the places where he had been with Jesus. He did not want to meet any of the other disciples, either. During the whole day he was sad, lonely, and afraid. He heard that Jesus had been condemned to die immediately. But he felt that he could not go out to the skull-shaped hill where his Master was to be crucified.

Sometime on the Sabbath, John found him. He told Peter that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, both secret disciples of Jesus, had buried the body of the Lord in a new tomb, in a lovely garden. John himself knew the place. Finally Peter was persuaded to go home with John, but he could not be comforted. Even when John reminded him that Jesus had said he would rise again after three days, Peter was not happy. He felt he had so disappointed Jesus that he could not expect or even hope to be forgiven.

But early in the morning, Peter caught sight of

Mary Magdalene hurrying down the street toward John's home. When she reached the house she was so excited that they could hardly make out what she was trying to tell them. At last she said clearly that she had come from the tomb, that it was empty, and an angel had told her that Jesus had arisen!

Immediately Peter and John ran through the quiet streets toward the garden where the tomb was. John ran faster than Peter, but when he reached the place and saw the stone rolled aside, he stood still. But Peter entered the tomb and touched the grave clothes to make sure that Jesus was not there.

That same evening Peter met again with the other disciples in a large, upper room. They had closed the doors for fear of the enemies of Jesus who were still angry because he had escaped them. Then suddenly, as they talked about Jesus, he appeared to them. It was Jesus, they knew him; he talked with them, and it was wonderful to hear his voice; but he did not remain long with them. When he had gone Peter could hardly believe it, so great was his joy.

A week later Jesus was with them again for a while, but he did not go about with them as at other times and they felt, somehow, everything had changed.

Peter began to be restless. If they were not to be with Jesus all the time, he might as well go home to Capernaum, and again take up fishing. James and John, Thomas and Nathanael and two others decided to go back, too. They heard that Jesus had

returned to Galilee, but several days passed and they did not see him.

One night a short time later they had a very discouraging experience. They rowed the boat around to several different parts of the lake, but they caught no fish. When it began to grow light, they heard someone calling to them from the shore, "Have you caught any fish?"

"No!" Peter answered. The mist was still so thick that they could not see the person on the shore clearly enough to recognize him. Again they heard the same voice call out to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat!"

They dragged the heavy net over to the other side and let it down into the water. Soon the lines began to pull. Peter looked over the edge of the boat. Through the clear water he could see a school of fish swimming into the net. John looked, too, and said to Peter in an awed voice, "It must be the Lord who spoke to us."

Peter did not even wait to help pull in the heavy net. Diving into the water, he swam to shore. There he found Jesus bending over a small fire.

"Bring some of the fish you have caught," he said.

This seemed just like the Jesus they used to know. Peter ran to help the others as they brought in the great net full of fish. They broiled and ate some of them, but they did not ask Jesus any questions. They gazed at him, and listened to every word he said, and wondered about what new work he would give them.

When the meal was finished, Peter looked long into Jesus' eyes, but he did not know how to put into words what was in his heart. However, Jesus seemed to understand, and asked gently, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord, you know that I love you," Peter replied.

"Feed my lambs," said Jesus.

A second time Jesus put the same question, and Peter gave the same answer. But when Jesus asked the same question the third time, Peter was hurt. Jesus did not trust him any more! With pleading eyes he insisted, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you."

Once more Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

Then as Jesus spoke of future suffering and death that Peter would bravely endure, Peter was suddenly glad. Jesus did trust him again! This time he would be worthy of that trust. He would not be afraid to suffer, for Jesus had given him a new courage. He remembered that Jesus had given him the name of "Peter," that meant "rock." He would be the rock that his name signified.

Peter Preaches His First Sermon

SEVERAL weeks had passed since that last morning when Peter and the other disciples had been with Jesus beside the lake. Peter remembered vividly how he had told Jesus three times that he loved him, and Jesus had shown that he trusted Peter again by telling him to feed his sheep. But Peter did not know as yet just how he was to do this. And now Jesus was gone.

The other disciples missed Jesus, too. It seemed strange not to be going about from village to village with him. The best they could do now was to meet together every day to talk about him. They had a large, airy meeting place in the house of Mary, the mother of Mark. Here several of the women who had followed Jesus, his mother Mary, and his own brothers joined the disciples.

There were only eleven disciples at first, for Judas had killed himself when he realized what a terrible thing he had done in betraying Jesus. Peter's

thought was that someone should be chosen to take Judas' place. He suggested it one evening when about one hundred and twenty followers of Jesus had met together for prayer.

"How shall we know who should be chosen?" asked someone in the group.

"I think it should be someone who has followed Jesus as long as we have," said Peter, "and one who saw him after his resurrection."

"Joseph Barsabas would meet those tests," one man suggested.

"Or Matthias," said another.

They all talked about these two men for awhile and then prayed that God would direct them in their choice. Through this prayer they were led to choose Matthias.

But although there were twelve men once more to carry on Jesus' work, and many others who were ready to help them, they had made no plans as to what they should do. Jesus had told them in Jerusalem to meet together and to pray until the heavenly Father sent the Holy Spirit who would guide them. Yet it was now six weeks and nothing had happened. Peter could see that some were growing restless, while others grew stronger in this time of prayer and waiting. He noticed especially the young man Mark in whose mother's house they met for their daily prayer.

"Someday," thought Peter, "when the rest of us are old, John Mark may be one of the leaders." He did not dream then of the great service Mark would

give to all the Christians in the years to come by writing a life of Jesus.

Fifty days after the Passover was the early harvest feast, called Pentecost. As the disciples were praying and talking about Jesus in the upper room, suddenly they heard a sound like a strong wind in the trees. Then it looked as though flames were resting on the head of each one. Immediately a new courage came to them and they began to speak in various languages. As Peter went out into the street, he saw that a crowd had gathered. They were all amazed as they heard here and there a word in their own language. But some in the crowd made fun of the disciples and said they had been drinking too much wine.

At once Peter knew that here was his chance to tell this great throng about Jesus. This time he was not a bit afraid. Standing where all could see him, he called the other disciples. They stood on either side of him and he spoke in a clear voice, "Men of Judea, and all that dwell at Jerusalem, listen to my words!"

Then he quoted the words of the prophet Joel that he had learned when he was a boy:

"I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh,
And your young men shall see visions,
And your old men shall dream dreams."

Peter reminded the people of the good works Jesus had done. He recited passages that good King David had written about the Messiah who would come some day. And finally he accused the men before him of

killing the Messiah whom God had sent to them, and whom God had raised from the dead.

As soon as he had finished, Peter heard cries all through the crowd, "What shall we do?"

"Repent and be baptized," was Peter's reply. Then one after another stepped forward to speak to Peter and the other disciples. They wanted to live a new life that would be more pleasing to God. They decided to join the followers of Jesus.

All day long until it was dark, people kept coming to talk with Peter and the others. But even Peter could hardly believe it when these new believers were counted, and he found that over three thousand had decided to be Christians as a result of his first sermon. Strangely enough he did not feel like boasting at all. He was just glad that God had given him work to do—work that might help to make up for some of the wrong things he had done.

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